

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-15 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 NIC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 DRC-01

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R 281440Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4477

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USINT BAGHDAD

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 11526

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFORU SY, UR

SUBJECT: REPORTED SYRIAN-SOVIET FRICTION

1. ARTICLE BY "SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT" IN SEPT 27
L'ORIENT-LE JOUR AND AN NAHAR REPORTED HIGH DEGREE
OF FRICTION BETWEEN SARG AND SOV ADVISORS, CLAIMED
THAT MOVEMENTS OF SOVS HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO SEVERE
RESTRICTIONS AND IMPLIED THAT SARG MOVING TOWARD SAME
SORT OF ANTI-SOV ACTION WHICH EGYPT TOOK LAST YEAR
(BFIS M231101).

2. WE HAVE CHECKED CAREFULLY WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES
HERE, INCLUDING EDITOR OF L'ORIENT. THERE IS AGREEMENT
THAT FRICTION HAS ALWAYS EXISTED BETWEEN SYRAIN MILITARY
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AND THEIR SOV ADVISORS, AND BETWEEN SARG AND USSR, CONCERN-

ING SAME SORT OF PROBLEMS WHICH EXISTED BETWEEN SOVS AND EGYPTIANS. THERE IS ALSO AGREEMENT THAT FRICTION INCREASED SHARPLY AS RESULT OF STUNNING IAF SUCCESS AGAINST SYRIAN AIR FORCE ON SEPT 13, WITH SYRIAN NATURALLY BLAMING DEBACLE ON INFERIOR SOV EQUIPMENT AND SOVS BLAMING IT ON INFERIOR SYRIAN PILOTS. ALSO, SOVS REPORTED UNHAPPY OVER SYRIAN "ENTENTE" WITH JORDAN AND EGYPT AND, BEHIND SCENES, SAUDI ARABIA. HOWEVER, OBSERVERS ALSO AGREE THAT THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF RUPTURE BETWEEN USSR AND SARG AT THIS TIME AND THAT FRICTION WILL PROBABLY SOON DROP OFF IN INTENSITY. USSR HAS TOO MUCH INVESTED IN SYRIA TO TAKE OFFENSE AT SYRIAN COMPLAINTS OVER INFERIOR ARMS WHILE SARG STILL TOO DEPENDENT UPON POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT OF SOVS.

3. SOV EMBASSY HAS ADMITTED TO L'ORIENT AND AN NAHAR THAT THERE WAS SOME TROUBLE AS RESULT OF SEPT 13 AIR CLASH BUT CLAIMS THERE NO UNDERLYING FRICTION AND THIS ONLY SMALL, PASSING FIT OF BAD HUMOR. THEY ADMIT TRUTH OF REPORT THAT SOV AMBASSADOR MOHIEDINOV GIVEN VERY HARD TIME BY HAFEZ ASSAD ON SEPT 15 OVER ALLEGED SOV RESPONSIBILITY FOR SYRIAN LOSSES (BIS M 151916) BUT PASS IT OFF AS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE.

4. COMMENT: WE EXPECT THERE MAY BE ANOTHER SPATE OF PUBLICITY ABOUT EFFICACY AND SINCERITY OF SOV SUPPORT FOR ARAB CAUSE AS RESULT OF PRESS STORIES AND SOV CLARIFICATION MOREOVER, WE UNDERSTAND FINAL RESOLUTIONS OF MEETING ARAB COMMUNIST PARTIES WHICH ENDING TODAY (SEPT 28) IN BEIRUT EXPECTED IRRITATE SOME ARAB REGIMES AND ARAB "PROGRESSIVES" BY THEIR CONSERVATIVE TONE.
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